

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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CIAE-00 COME-00 EPG-02 DODE-00 EB-07 FPC-01 H-01
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USIA-06 OES-07 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 ACDA-07
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TAGS: ESC, PFOR, ENRG, EEC

SUBJECT: EC COMMISSION COMMENTS TO EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ON
1968 URANIUM LOSS

1. DURING THE COURSE OF A GENERAL DEBATE ON COMMUNITY ENERGY POLICY IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT MAY 10, EC COMMISSIONER FOR ENERGY BRUNNER REPLIED TO A SERIES OF QUESTIONS RAISED BY PARLIAMENT'S SOCIALIST GROUP REGARDING THE 1968 DISAPPEARANCE OF 200 TONS OF NATURAL URANIUM. PARLIAMENT ASKED FOR:
(A) CONFIRMATION OF THE LOSS; (B) AND AN ACCOUNTING OF WHAT THE COMMISSION HAD DONE TO TRY TO TRACE THE MISSING URANIUM AND WHY PARLIAMENT WAS NOT INFORMED OF THE LOSS.

2. IN REPLY, BRUNNER: CONFIRMED THE LOSS; EXPLAINED THAT IT WAS EURATOM'S SECURITY SUPERVISION SYSTEM WHICH HAD NOTIFIED THE COMMISSION OF THE LOSS; SAID THAT WHEN IT HAD CONFIRMED THE LOSS, THE COMMISSION HAD INFORMED THE THREE MEMBER STATES CONCERNED--I.E. BELGIUM, GERMANY, AND ITALY--AND THE US AS WELL; NOTED THAT EURATOM HAS NO POLICE POWER AND, THAT ONCE THE PROBLEM WAS IDENTIFIED,
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IT WAS UP TO MEMBER STATES TO TAKE REMEDIAL ACTION. HE CONCLUDED, MOREOVER, THAT EURATOM SECURITY AND REPORTING PROCEDURES HAVE BEEN STRENGTHENED SINCE THE INCIDENT.

3. UNDER HEAVY ATTACK FROM THE SOCIALIST BENCHES, WHICH CHARGED THAT THERE HAD BEEN A COVER UP "WITH OVERTONES OF WATERGATE", BRUNNER STUCK TO HIS POSITION THAT IT IS

MEMBER STATES WHICH HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR UNDERTAKING REMEDIAL STEPS WHEN A SITUATION LIKE THE URANIUM LOSS OCCURS. IN RESPONSE TO MP'S QUERIES AS TO WHY THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT WAS NOT INFORMED ON A CONFIDENTIAL BASIS, BRUNNER SAID IT HAD BEEN IMPOSSIBLE TO DO THIS BECAUSE OF THE SENSITIVITY OF THE ISSUE AND BECAUSE ONCE THE CONCERNED MEMBER STATES HAD BEEN APPRISED OF THE PROBLEM, THE COMMISSION AND OTHER COMMUNITY ORGANS HAD NO COMPETENCE REGARDING THE FOLLOW-UP INQUIRY. BRUNNER ACKNOWLEDGED THAT IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT OF A RECURRENCE, "GENERAL POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS" SUGGEST THAT IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA TO BRIEF PARLIAMENT CONFIDENTIALLY, SHOULD THAT THEN PROVE POSSIBLE.

4. BRUNNER SAID THE COMMISSION HAS PROPOSED, AND THE EC COUNCIL HAS ENDORSED, AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF EURATOM INSPECTORS. HE SAID THAT ONE CONCLUSION HE DRAWS FROM THE EARLIER URANIUM LOSS IS THAT THE COMMUNITY "SHOULD DO MORE TO HARMONIZE THE PROVISIONS GOVERNING PHYSICAL PROTECTION. THIS IS PARTICULARLY VALID FOR TRANS-FRONTIER TRANSPORTATION OF FISSIONABLE MATERIAL." HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT MEMBER STATES HAVE RESISTED SUCH HARMONIZATION THUS FAR.

5. BRITISH LABOR MEMBER OF EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT TOLD MISSION OFFICERS MAY 11 THAT THE PARLIAMENT IN GENERAL AND THE SOCIALIST GROUP IN PARTICULAR HAD NOT BEEN SATISFIED WITH BRUNNER'S REPLY. HE SAID PARLIAMENT'S ENERGY COMMITTEE PLANS TO ESTABLISH A SUBCOMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THE URANIUM LOSS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WAS DISCOVERED--E.G., WHAT THE COMMISSION DID TO ENCOURAGE RECOVERY OF THE URANIUM, AND WHY PARLIAMENT WAS NOT TOLD ABOUT THE LOSS. HE SAID FRANKLY THAT THE SOCIALIST GROUP IS OUT TO PUT EC COMMISSIONER HAFERKAMP ON THE GRIDDLE. HAFERKAMP, WHO IS NOW COMMISSIONER FOR EXTERNAL RELATIONS, WAS AT THE TIME OF THE LOSS COMMISSIONER FOR ENERGY. THE SOCIALIST GROUP BELIEVES THAT HE, A NATIONAL OF GERMANY WHERE THE PURCHASER OF THE URANIUM WAS LOCATED, IS SOMEHOW PARTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE "COVER UP"--I.E., THE FACT THAT THE LOSS WAS HIDDEN FROM PUBLIC VIEW FOR SO LONG. HINTON

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Disposition Case Number: n/a
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